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O 261525Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2482  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
INFO RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHOND/DIR ONDCP WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 003424

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL, INL/AP,SCA,AF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: INITIAL REPORT OF AIRCRAFT AND PERSONNEL LOSS,  
INCLUDING 10 U.S. KIA - DURING COUNTER NARCOTICS MISSION  
ACTIVITIES

11. (U) This message is Sensitive But Unclassified: Please  
handle accordingly.

12. (SBU) Summary. In the morning of October 26, during a  
counternarcotics counterinsurgency operation in Badghis  
Province (northeast of Herat), a U.S. military CH-47 Chinook  
helicopter crashed, leading to the deaths of ten U.S.  
personnel (3 DEA Special Agents and 7 U.S. Army Special  
Operations Forces). The helicopter was carrying 36 personnel  
(22 American, 14 Afghan National Army soldiers) at the time.  
The CH-47 that crashed was one of two U.S. military  
helicopters that had just conducted a joint operation  
(involving DEA, the U.S. Army Special Forces, the Afghan  
National Army and Counternarcotics Police-Afghanistan) at the  
Darreh-ye Bazaar in Qades District of Badghis Province. Of  
the 26 survivors of the crash, 13 are reported to be in  
critical condition while 13 are ambulatory. Family members  
of the deceased are (still) being notified. End summary.

13. (SBU) At approximately 0330 in the morning of October 26,  
a U.S. military CH-47 Chinook helicopter crashed following a  
counternarcotics counterinsurgency nexus operation in the  
Qades District of Badghis Province. The DEA and the U.S.  
Army were conducting "Operation Lexington," which involved  
over 100 personnel, military close-air support, Intelligence,  
Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations and  
aircraft; and Quick-Reaction Forces (QRF). Additionally,  
"Operation Lexington" utilized helicopter assault operations,  
including Afghan Forces. It was also executing Afghan search  
warrants for narcotics and weapons at Darreh-ye Bazaar, a  
major drug bazaar located approximately 150 kilometers  
northeast of Herat in the Qades District of Badghis Province.

(Note: State Department INL helos were not involved in this  
operation.) Following completion of the operation at  
Darreh-ye Bazaar at approximately 2am, ground forces there  
called the aircraft to extract them from the site of the  
operation. Note: Surviving DEA Special Agents with the  
operation reported that significant amounts of narcotics and  
improvised explosive devices were seized and destroyed at the  
site.

14. (SBU) Subsequent to that, at 0330, one of the two  
helicopters participating in the operation crashed. The  
CH-47 contained 36 personnel (including crew) - 22 Americans  
(8 DEA and 14 U.S. Army Special Forces) and 14 Afghans  
(Afghan National Army). Ten Americans (3 DEA and 7 U.S. Army

Special Forces) died in the crash. No Afghans were killed in the crash. Following the crash, all 26 survivors were evacuated; 13 were reported as being in critical condition while the remaining 13 were classified as walking wounded. All 26 injured were flown by the second helicopter (which suffered no damage) to a hospital in Herat Province; the 13 in critical condition were then transported by C-130 to a trauma unit at Bagram Airfield north of Kabul.

15. (SBU) At this time there has been no determination as to why the helicopter went down, and whether the reason was mechanical failure, hostile enemy fire, or other. On-site DEA personnel have confirmed that seven enemy forces targeted in the operation were also killed when the helicopter crashed.

16. (SBU) DEA Assistant Regional Director, Kabul Country Office, was notified by Carson Ullrich, team leader of the DEA FAST team based in Kandahar, of the crash at 0430. The operation to secure the target-site is ongoing. All reported casualties are United States citizens, including: Air Crewmen, U.S. Army Special Forces, and DEA Special Agents.

17. (SBU) Remains of all 10 deceased individuals will be transported to Bagram Airfield on a C-130 aircraft. A "Ramp Ceremony" to receive the remains will be held at Bagram in the morning of October 27, and will be attended by Ambassador Ricciardone and senior members of the Embassy Country Team, including the leadership of the DEA Kabul Country Team Office. The remains will then be transported to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware later that day.

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18. (SBU) The families of the deceased will be notified by DEA and DOD in the morning hours (EST) of October 26.

19. (SBU) The Embassy has issued the following press guidance in response to press inquiries that have already come in:

October 26, 2009  
U.S. Embassy Statement on Helicopter Crash in Western Afghanistan

Today the U.S. Embassy mourns the loss of three civilian members of the Embassy community and seven members of the U.S. military, who were killed in a helicopter crash in western Afghanistan. The helicopter, carrying Afghan security forces, U.S. military and U.S. civilians, crashed for unknown reasons. Fourteen Afghan security personnel, 11 U.S. military personnel, and one American civilian were also injured in this crash,

We wish for a speedy recovery for those injured today, and send thoughts and sympathies to those families who lost loved ones.

EIKENBERRY